

Contributions

MODERATOR'S ANNUAL SERMON

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In your patience possess ye your souls. Luke 21:19.

Beloved Moderator, Elders, Delegates and Brethren: Thru the patience of God our Heavenly Father our lives have been prolonged during another conference year and again are permitted to meet and greet each other at "Beautiful Winona" in National Conference work and I bespeak at your hands for our beloved Zion and her helpful auxiliaries great and liberal things. The language of my text was recently very pertinently quoted by our beloved editor as the climax and conclusion of an able editorial personal on missions and the price of denominational Sunday-school literature and being thus brought to our notice it became at once the inspiration for the present effort. Among the many graces and virtues that adorn the character and soul of a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ like so many precious stones of various lusters and brilliant colors, there is no grace or virtue more beautiful than this of patience. No other virtue that brings more of glory to God in the highest or does so much towards making and keeping peace on earth and good will among men. No other grace or virtue that makes a child of God more happy within himself or more agreeable towards all with whom he may come in contact. And this virtue is sure to be commended and applauded in others by those who do not possess it themselves, even if in so doing they clearly condemn their own conduct and set their approval to the truth and value of this heaven born accomplishment. Patience is an emanation of God and manifests itself in his children by a proper behavior in times of disappointment and suffering. Patience is not a want of sensibility of evils present or to come, nor is it a disinterestedness towards revealed or promised good. No affliction or disappointment is joyous for the present. The Master himself was keenly affected by his sufferings. Nor should the blessings which God has inspired us to hope for and expect allow us to become cold and indifferent towards obtaining them, for that on our part would be a reflection on the preciousness of the blessings and would make us very indifferent in our efforts to possess them. Genuine Christian patience is a propensity or inclination keeping us serene and tranquil in mind and undeviating in the performance of our obligations due to God and to man, under the greatest disappointments or long deferred hopes and expectations and is in direct opposition to rashness of spirit. Amidst all the storms of the great ocean of life and in the multitude of changeable environments and the varied revolutions of the wheel of God's providence, patience is the golden cord and silver thread that evenly runs thru the whole web and woof of the Christian's life. The exhortation of our Lord, when he

revealed to his disciples the trials and sufferings and disappointments that they would be called upon to endure for His name sake, is most appropriately given in our text. "In your patience possess ye your souls." We are so very apt to fall into error because of the hastiness of our conclusions in reference to the appearance of things. Especially is this so when our undertakings are not realized according to our expectations or in our own set time and like naughty, pouting children we begin to doubt the promises and to suspect the goodness and mercy of our Lord forgetting that it is not in my time nor in my way, nor in your time nor in your way, but in the Lord's own time and way, that all things shall be brought about that are for His glory and for the good of His church and for the welfare of his people. A greater exercise of patience would give us a disposition to place all in God's hand and would keep us from unlawful efforts and from questionable methods to reach the goal towards which we are going. It is a lack of this virtue that has brought many questionable movements into the church and has made many disgruntled pessimists with long, sour faces that are a hindrance to the cause of Christ and if the good Lord could use them would do well, we think, to take them to himself. It was that man Abraham who "walked with God" and was tried as man was never tried before and yet faithful, who in the darkest hour that came to him still trusted in God, and by faith and patience in the crucial test of his life, confidently cried, Jehovah-jireh. And in like manner may the patient follower of Christ today, in the hour of his greatest disappointment that can come to him confidently say "The Lord will provide." The most essential quality of this virtue is perseverance in the way of Christian privileges and Christian opportunities, however many discouragements or disappointments may present themselves. It is the impatient that grow dilatory and "faint and weary in their minds" "but the righteous shall hold on his way." Hence we are admonished by St. Paul "To run with patience the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." This virtue is an emanation of God and in degree of our possession and exercising of it are we God-like, and how wonderful and surprising is his patience. Mercy calls night and day. Why will ye die when God in great mercy is coming so mighty? "For the good of the enemies of God as well as for the friends of God the sun shines, the rains fall, the seasons take their regular turn, the friendly influence of light and heat are exerted, and to a world that rejected him the glad tidings of salvation are still preached and the cup of blessing is still held out to those who have so often dashed it from them and God is graciously waiting to forgive and graciously receive all who so long and so daringly have provoked him, if they will only come and accept the freely offered invitation. Much as we admire this

virtue in God the Father, still more wonderfully is it manifested in the person and life of his son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who in the exercise of this virtue is our perfect example. He left his heavenly home of glory and came to sin cursed earth, was born of woman, cradled in a manger, lived as the son of man, that the sons of men might become sons of God and possess a home not made with hands eternal in the heavens. For the fulfilling of all righteousness, the Master of all the universe steps down into the waters of the Jordan to receive baptism at the hands of his harbinger. In his life and service among his disciples he is servant of all. In his sojourn among men his poverty was such that he well could say "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." In his patience he drank the bitter cup of persecution and sufferings to its very dregs. Crucified between two malefactors, dying amidst the amazing scenes of Calvary, the earth quaking in her orbit, the rocks the giant fastenings of the mountains rent, the unlocking and throwing ajar the gates of the mausoleum and sepulchers and many bodies of the sleeping inhabitants thereof arose and appeared unto many after his resurrection. Amidst all that earth and hell could afflict he murmured not but placed the finishing touch to the master pattern of patience and his gospel enjoins imitation, being indeed the badge of that gospel and its professors.

All the ancient worthies who have been eminent for their faith and close walking with God, have been equally conspicuous for their patience, without which their faith must have failed in the day of great trial. It being as St. Paul tells us "thru faith and patience" that they "inherited the promises." "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee, and so after he had *patiently* endured, he obtained the promise." Patience may be the offspring of faith, and if so, it is the dutiful child of support upon which the parent may and can and does recline in the day of great trial. What was it that maintained Noah's faith as a reformer and preacher of righteousness for a hundred and twenty years when there were no visible fruits of his labors, except his own household? The answer is not far to find, it was *patience*. And it was this same virtue possessed in an eminent degree that made it possible for the young man Joseph to endure the ill treatment of his brethren, and to forgive their evil conduct and become their deliverer in the day of great famine, tho he now was ruler in Egypt and had all power of retaliation over them.

Moses so often insulted and abused by a rebellious people, *patiently* supplicated God in their behalf. The God selected, God appointed, and God anointed king of Israel by the same, virtue restrained himself, and would do no harm to his enemy Saul, tho he